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Upper Basin States Approve the Implementation of the 2024 System Conservation Pilot Program

On March 4, 2024, the Upper Division States of Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming acting through the Upper Colorado River Commission (UCRC) directed implementation of the 2024 System Conservation Pilot Program (SCPP). The 2024 program focuses on projects that support: innovations in water conservation, local drought resiliency and better understanding related to a potential Demand Management program. The 2024 SCPP was developed based on input from water users, water management organizations, and previous SCPP participants. The Commission recommended 115 projects move forward for implementation. These projects will conserve approximately 70,000 acre-feet of Colorado River water across the four Upper Division States, and include participation from Tribal, agricultural, industrial and municipal water users. The SCPP program is funded by the Inflation Reduction Act and is a unique collaboration between the Bureau of Reclamation, the four Upper Division States acting through the UCRC, Upper Basin Tribes, water users, and other stakeholders. The conservation projects are expected to be implemented beginning in April 2024.

Anne Castle – *“The SCPP is a tremendous example of federal – state – tribe – water user collaboration resulting in partnerships and water conservation that improve the Colorado River system. This program represents one of the tools in the Upper Basin toolbox that can be used to contribute to a more sustainable river system. Many thanks to the Reclamation, UCRC, Tribes, water users, and State staff for the ongoing efforts that allow us to take this important step together.”*

Rebecca Mitchell – *“System conservation is challenging, but we have learned a lot and have used our experiences to build a better program this year. Water users in Colorado are using the SCPP to explore and develop innovative ways to prepare for a drier future. I am hopeful that the lessons learned this year will provide new tools that will support Colorado water users in the future.”*

Estevan Lopez – *“The water conservation actions being implemented in the Upper Division States are significant, especially in light of the uncertainty our water users face every year due to hydrologic shortages. The partnerships and tools being developed through the SCPP will help us manage Colorado River operations as climate change impacts our future water supplies. Some SCPP projects will provide a unique opportunity to explore the feasibility of a potential Demand Manage program. ”*

Gene Shawcroft – *“Utah water users have stepped up once again in 2024 to support the Colorado River system through robust participation in the System Conservation Pilot Program (SCPP). Through this year's SCPP projects, the Colorado River Authority of Utah looks forward to learning more about demand management feasibility and innovative water conservation strategies in our state. I am grateful to the UCRC staff and consultants, Authority staff and the Utah Division of Water Rights staff for standing-up this important effort.”*

Brandon Gebhart – *“Many Wyoming water users are developing new approaches and tools to sustain their operations in the face of a future with additional water supply uncertainty. They recognize SCPP as*

a tool to provide resources and information to help build innovative and creative solutions to adapt to that uncertain future. I applaud the work and collaboration between Wyoming water users and stakeholders, Wyoming SEO staff, Reclamation, and UCRC staff to improve the program for 2024.”